

## **NATIONAL MANUFACTURING AND SUPPLY CHAIN CONFERENCE TO TAKE PLACE NEXT WEEK**

The future of Ireland's manufacturing industry and supply chain security post Brexit is the theme of the 2018 National Manufacturing and Supply Chain Conference taking place next Wednesday, 31 January in the Citywest Convention Centre.

The conference is the largest gathering of manufacturing and supply chain professionals in Ireland, with over 3000 delegates registered, 200 speakers and over 170 exhibitors.

Significant concern has been raised in recent months regarding the potential impact of Brexit on trade across the border with Northern Ireland and also the widespread disruption to the UK's supply chain and the effect this will have on the island of Ireland as a whole.

While an agreement was reached between the UK and the EU in December last year to guarantee 'regulatory alignment' and avoid a hard border scenario, fresh doubts have already begun to emerge as to how this can be achieved.

"People working in the two most exposed sectors manufacturing and agrifood, on both sides of the border, have many concerns as to how the promise of regulatory alignment between the UK and Ireland would work." said John Whelan, former CEO of the Irish Exporters Association and Conference Chairperson.

"Hundreds of manufacturing companies, large and small, rely exclusively on the UK market. Most are very worried about the impact of Brexit tariffs on their imported parts and supplies, as well as export sales to the UK. The tariff and duty costs as well as added paperwork and inspection costs will impact heavily on profits and jobs if practical measures are not agreed and stress tested before March 2019. This isn't just an issue as to how trade will be conducted across the Northern Ireland border but also exports and imports from England and across the Britain to Europe—our landbridge to our European markets. Road haulage companies have already warned of significant knock effects for the Irish supply chain".

"We are facing severe decline of our manufacturing industry if a free trade agreement with the UK is not negotiated". He concluded.

There will be several talks on the topic of Brexit at this year's conference with Brian Murphy, Head of Trade Services, Irish Exporters Association outlining how manufacturers can prepare

their supply chain in advance of Brexit, Minister for State Pat Breen will be outlining the government's Brexit mitigation approach and a panel will take place with former EU Minister, Lucinda Creighton of Vulcan Consulting, Eoin McNeill, President of British Irish Chamber of Commerce, Paschal McCarthy former MD of GE Healthcare and Barry Heavey, Director of Life Sciences with Accenture Ireland exploring the potential impacts of Brexit.

Other speakers of note attending the event include Peter Nolan, Worldwide President, BD Medical Pharmaceutical Systems, Dr. Andrew Lynch, CIO, Irish Manufacturing Research, Ivan Kelly, Global Supply Chain R&D Programme Manager, Hewlett Packard and Edward Sweeney, Professor of Logistics and Director, Aston Logistics and Systems Institute, Aston University, Birmingham, UK.